



The Genocide Education Project

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**Suggested updates to California State Educational
Framework, incorporating information about Armenian
History, Armenian-Americans and Armenians from California**

4.4 Students explain how California became an agricultural and industrial power, tracing the transformation of the California economy and its political and cultural development since the 1850s.

4.4.4. Describe rapid American immigration, internal migration, settlement, and the growth of towns and cities (e.g., Los Angeles).

Armenian Example:

Excerpt from Cobblestone, May 2000 v21 i5 p10
A Fruitful Legacy by Nicole E. Vartanian.

Armenian Americans in California

More than a century ago, Armenians began to leave their country in large numbers. Some went in search of new opportunities in business or education. Most, however, left their homeland as a result of acts of genocide. This violence caused Armenians to seek safe, productive places in which to rebuild their lives.

The United States is now home to more than one million Armenians. Approximately half of this population resides in California, largely in the cities of Glendale, Fresno, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

The first Armenian to arrive in California was called Normart, which means "new man" in Armenian. (He was so relieved to find himself safely out of danger that he pledged to become a "new man" in this new world.) Normart visited Fresno in 1874, settling there in 1878. In 1881, the Seropian brothers also settled there. They wrote to relatives and friends describing the landscape of their new home. It reminded them of the Armenian heartland. They told of the agricultural opportunities available in California.

Around this time, Armenian Americans had a key role in the development of the fig industry in Fresno. They helped reproduce varieties such as Smyrna figs and white Adriatic figs and exported them to other parts of this country and the world. Similarly, Armenian Americans played instrumental roles in the development of the bulgur (cracked wheat), grape, and raisin industries in California. They also were the first Oriental rug merchants in the state.

More Armenian immigrants followed these trailblazers, many fleeing the massacres of the Turkish government from 1894 to 1896. In 1901, Reverend Haroutoon Jenanian established

the first and only U.S. community inhabited exclusively by Armenians. He sold them small tracts of undeveloped land near Fresno. By 1920, hundreds of Armenians lived in this area, known as Yetttem, or "Garden of Eden."

In the 1920s, Armenians began to move from rural regions to cities. They hoped to recover from losses encountered when the prices of raisins and other farm products fell. As a result, by 1930, the Armenian population of Los Angeles was the largest in California.

Today, California is home to Armenian American television shows and newspapers, nursing homes, churches, schools, and cultural organizations. The state also has produced many noteworthy Armenian Americans, including businessman Kirk Kerkorian and author William Saroyan. In addition, two of the most important Armenian military leaders lived in California. General Antranig Ozanian, who was instrumental in the struggle against Turkish oppression at the beginning of the twentieth century, settled in Fresno. Monte Melkonian, who led the forces that secured independence of Armenian territory from Azerbaijani control in the early 1990s, was born in Tulare County, California.

4.4.9. Analyze the impact of twentieth-century Californians on the nation's artistic and cultural development, including the rise of the entertainment industry (e.g., Louis B. Meyer, Walt Disney, John Steinbeck, Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange, John Wayne).

Armenian Example:

William Saroyan (August 31, 1908 - May 18, 1981) was an American author who wrote many plays and other fictional works about growing up as the son of impoverished Armenian immigrants. His works are still widely read today and give a glimpse into the life of immigrants in the early 20th Century residing in California. Saroyan won an Academy Award for Best Original Story Writing for his play *The Human Comedy* (1943).

California Social Studies Standards

Eighth Grade

8.6 Students analyze the divergent paths of the American people from 1800 to the mid-1800s and the challenges they faced, with emphasis on the Northeast.

8.6 .3. List the reasons for the wave of immigration from Northern Europe to the United States and describe the growth in the number, size, and spatial arrangements of cities (e.g., Irish immigrants and the Great Irish Famine).

Note: Immigrants were arriving from other parts of Europe and the Middle East. Identifying only immigration from Northern Europe not only excludes Armenians but also Sicilians, Slavs and Jews.

Armenian Example: Armenians immigrated in large numbers to the U.S. after being victim to a series of massacres in the Ottoman Empire in the mid 1890s. The next wave was in 1909 after 30,000 Armenians were killed in a massacre in Adana, Turkey. After the Armenian Genocide of 1915, Armenians who survived tried to immigrate to the U.S., Canada, France and elsewhere.

California Social Studies Standards

Tenth Grade

10.4 Students analyze patterns of global change in the era of New Imperialism in at least two of the following regions or countries: Africa, Southeast Asia, China, India, Latin America, and the Philippines.

10.4.1. Describe the rise of industrial economies and their link to imperialism and colonialism (e.g., the role played by national security and strategic advantage; moral issues raised by the search for national hegemony, Social Darwinism, and the missionary impulse; material issues such as land, resources, and technology).

Armenian Example:

American missionaries were ever present in the Ottoman Empire since the early 1800s. They were actively engaged in building schools and universities throughout Ottoman lands with the hope of converting residents to Protestantism. While missionaries rarely succeeded in converting Turkish citizens, they were successful in Armenian millets (communities).

During the 1800s, violence against the Armenian populations escalated at the hands of the Ottoman Turks. Missionaries, from the U.S. and Europe provided charitable aid to Armenians during this time of peril through the genocide in 1915 which was carried out by the Ottoman Turkish Government.

Not only did missionaries provide provisions and safe havens for Armenians, they also served as eye witnesses to the atrocities against the Armenians. Their accounts helped bring awareness of the suffering of the Armenians to a world audience.

10.5 Students analyze the causes and course of the First World War.

10.5.5. Discuss human rights violations and genocide, including the Ottoman government's actions against Armenian citizens.

Armenian Example:

Although the word “genocide” did not exist in 1915, the ethnic cleansing and mass extermination of the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire was clearly genocide. In fact, the man who invented the term, Raphael Lemkin, stated: “I became interested in genocide because it happened so many times. First to the Armenians and after the Armenians, Hitler took action.” His struggle for the international recognition of genocide led to the United Nations 1948 *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*.

The Armenian Genocide began during World War I and proved to be the most devastating human catastrophe the world had ever witnessed until that time. It began in full force in Constantinople (now Istanbul) on April 24, 1915 when Ottoman soldiers rounded up and executed over 250 Armenian community leaders, including writers, doctors, lawyers, teachers, priests and artists. Armenian males were removed from the Ottoman army, segregated into work gangs and later killed. By that summer, Armenian women, children, and the elderly were forced to march into the Syrian Desert. Although told by Turkish officials they would be relocated to safer havens, they were to be exterminated according to a scheme planned by the highest Ottoman authorities. Deprived of food and water, Armenian women with children were often left with “Sophie’s Choice”—meaning they had to decide which child to leave behind with strangers in hopes that at least s/he might survive.

Responsibility for these deportations and massacres belonged to the Ottoman government headed by Talaat Pasha, the Minister of the Interior; Enver Pasha, the Minister of War; and Djemal Pasha, the Minister of the Navy. In their policy of Turkification of the remaining Ottoman Empire, they believed it necessary to eliminate non-Turkish groups such as the Armenians, Pontian Greeks, and Assyrians (all three were subjected to genocide). Telegrams sent by government leaders communicated to their subordinates the importance of “ensuring eternal rest [of the Armenians]”. The genocide continued, after the end of World War I, by the new Turkish government under Kemal Ataturk. Over 50% of the Armenian population, or 1.5 million people, perished in what had been the Ottoman Empire from 1915-1923.

The New York Times in 1915 alone published over 145 articles pertaining to the massacre of Armenians. In response, American citizens donated 117 million dollars of aid to help the starving Armenians. James Levi Barton and Cleveland H. Dodge led a massive American

international humanitarian relief effort, later known as Near East Relief. Posters like those depicting starving Armenian victims of genocide with the text "*Give or We Perish*" circulated throughout the country. Although the Allied governments failed to intervene militarily, this campaign on the part of private citizens saved thousands of lives.

10.6 Students analyze the effects of the First World War.

10.6.2. Describe the effects of the war and resulting peace treaties on population movement, the international economy, and shifts in the geographic and political borders of Europe and the Middle East.

Armenian Example:

The Allies called for the prosecution of Ottoman government officials and the Young Turks who were accused of wartime crimes at the end of World War I. Relief efforts for the Armenians who survived continued as well, but no significant actions were taken requiring the postwar Turkish government to provide restitution to the Armenian people for their immense material and human losses. Armenians who survived were forced into permanent exile from their homeland. Since the Armenian Genocide, the Armenian Diaspora has outnumbered those living in current day Armenia and historic Armenia (Eastern Turkey).

10.6.4. Discuss the influence of World War I on literature, art, and intellectual life in the West (e.g., Pablo Picasso, the "lost generation" of Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway).

Armenian Example:

Arshile Gorky (born Vostanik Manuk Adoyanan) was an Armenian Genocide survivor and a prominent contributor to the genre of abstract expressionism. Gorky wove the trauma he experienced during the Armenian Genocide into his art. His most famous piece "The Artist and His Mother" reflects his anguish of losing both his mother and homeland during the Genocide.

Franz Werfel, a German novelist, traveled to the Middle East and witnessed starving refugees which inspired him to write The Forty Days of Musa Dagh. The novel describes a moment of resistance during the Armenian Genocide of 1915. The book was seen as allegorical to the events unfolding in Germany regarding the treatment of Jews. The book was banned in Germany and Werfel had to flee. He eventually arrived in California where he died in 1945. Despite being banned, Jewish activists were able to read Werfel's novel and those interned in the Warsaw Ghetto used it as a blueprint for resisting Nazi forces. The impact of the novel has continued to inspire resistance across the globe.

11.3 Students analyze the role religion played in the founding of America, its lasting moral, social, and political impacts, and issues regarding religious liberty.

11.3.1. Describe the contributions of various religious groups to American civic principles and social reform movements (e.g., civil and human rights, individual responsibility and the work ethic, antimonarchy and self-rule, worker protection, family-centered communities).

Armenian Example:

Towards the end of the 1800s Armenians of the Ottoman Empire became the victims of increasing brutal pogroms. At the same time, Abolitionists were looking for new human rights concerns to support. For the first time in U.S. history, Americans became involved in international human rights efforts. Saving Armenians became their new mission.

Word of the atrocities against the Armenians was spread by missionaries in the Ottoman Empire who provided firsthand accounts to major newspapers and magazines of the time. The American Red Cross under Clara Barton's leadership was the first U.S. based organization to go to Turkey in the 1890s to help Armenians ravished by a series of massacres which claimed over 200,000 lives. Barton, herself, went to Constantinople and tried to persuade Ottoman authorities to stop the violence against Armenians.

With the onset of the Armenian Genocide in 1915, Americans established the American Committee for Armenian and Assyrian Relief (ACASR) which is known today as the Near East Foundation (NEF). Americans raised funds and provided charitable support for Armenians during and after the genocide.

11.4 Students trace the rise of the United States to its role as a world power in the twentieth century.

11.4.4. Explain Theodore Roosevelt's Big Stick diplomacy, William Taft's Dollar Diplomacy, and Woodrow Wilson's Moral Diplomacy, drawing on relevant speeches.

Armenian Example:

"President Woodrow Wilson was aware and concerned about the wide-scale massacres against Armenians and other minorities in Turkey. In a 1918 speech to Congress called "The Fourteen Points," in which he attempted to assure the country the "Great War" was being fought for moral causes, he said, "The Turkish portion of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under

Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development, and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations under international guarantees.”

11.7 Students analyze America’s participation in World War II.

11.7.5. Discuss the constitutional issues and impact of events on the U.S. home front, including the internment of Japanese Americans (e.g., Fred Korematsu v. United States of America) and the restrictions on German and Italian resident aliens; the response of the administration to Hitler’s atrocities against Jews and other groups; the roles of women in military production; and the roles and growing political demands of African Americans.

Armenian Example:

The term “genocide” was not created until 1944. It was devised by a legal scholar, Raphael Lemkin, who had been strongly influenced by his study of the Armenian case and the persecution of Jews under Nazi rule. In 1946, the United Nations adopted the language and two years later the *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* was passed. The United States did not sign the *Convention* until 1988. Also, the U.S. did not provide direct support for Jews in Nazi lands until the end of the war. While the U.S. did support the Nuremburg Trials, they still had a long way to go in creating proactive policies to save potential victims of genocide. The Holocaust was the second genocide of the 20th Century to which the U.S. did not provide ample support for the victims. The Armenian Genocide of 1915 was the first modern case.